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ABSTRACT

Companion to a five-part public television documentary, this book describes efforts across the United States to fight poverty, and also prescribes that we all take responsibility for a fight against economic inequality. The book's goal is to contribute to a meaningful discussion about poverty in America, a topic that cannot be broached today without noisy, bitter debate. Short stories, fiction excerpts, and personal essays are at the heart of the book. Policy-oriented discussions are limited to prologue and conclusion. Stories and essays were chosen to show the many manifestations of poverty today and a glimpse of the human faces usually hidden behind statistics and policies. Selections are arranged in three parts: (1) the poverty of children; (2) of families; and (3) of communities. The experience of poverty is examined in diverse places (inner cities, rural areas, farm communities) and among diverse groups (Whites, Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, migrant workers, homeless people). Many items deal with the experiences of poor children at home and in school. Selections also seek to demythologize the War on Poverty that began in the 1960s, document the enormous human potential and leadership that came out of that period, and profile leaders and activists struggling with poverty today. The selected writings are framed by graphs, facts, and statistics. Scattered throughout the book are 42 profiles of programs involving volunteer service, financial or food assistance, preschool education, civil rights advocacy, dropout prevention, youth job training or community service, literacy education, family support, housing improvement, and community development. Appendices contain 17 additional resources for action, a bibliographic review of sources on poverty and public policy, and an

annotated bibliography of 35 novels on poverty-related themes, to continue the dialogue. (SV)

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